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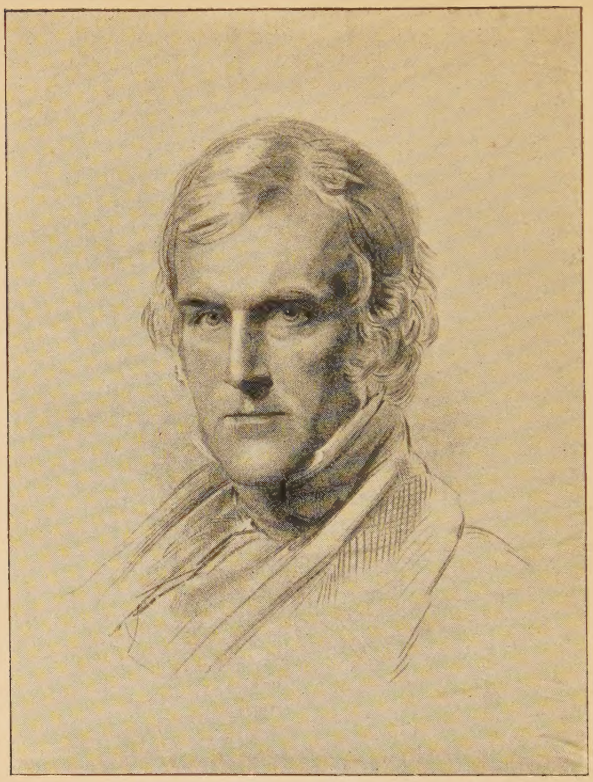

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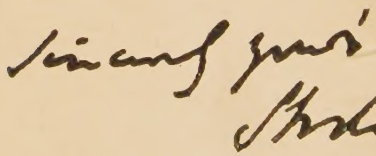

LORD STRATFORD DE REDCLIFFE

A SKETCH BY A. L. LEE

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ABRIDGED, BY PERMISSION, FROM "THE LIFE OF STRATFORD CANNING," BY

STANLEY LANE-POOLE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

W. E. H. LECKY, M.P.

London
JAMES NISBET & CO., LIMITED
21 BERNERS STREET
1897

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INTRODUCTION

It is the usual fate of a diplomatist to be, more than most public servants, unrecognised during his lifetime; and it is generally only many years after his death that the publication of confidential Government correspondence shows the great services he may have rendered to his country. The fate, however, of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe has been somewhat different. The almost absolute power he exercised at Constantinople in one of the most critical periods of the Eastern Question, the part which he played in the Crimean War, and the admirable pages in which Kinglake has depicted the majestic personality of the great Elchi, placed him in a position of prominence before the public eye which was attained by no other English diplomatist of his generation. In some respects this was not wholly to his advantage. The splendour of his Turkish career has thrown into the shade the other incidents of his diplomatic life; and it is idle to deny that the regeneration of Turkey,

for which he hoped and laboured, has not been accomplished. The event is not always a sufficient test of the wisdom of a politician. The fact that Turkey, under weak or wicked hands, has been drifting rapidly towards the abyss, is no proof that the generation of Lord Palmerston were wrong in believing, in 1854, that under capable rulers she might still have played an honourable part in the affairs of Europe. Nor can the policy of the Crimean War be justly estimated, unless we remember how different was the balance of power in Europe, and how much more pressing were the interests of England in the Mediterranean, before the unification of Italy and Germany, and before the great change that has taken place in the position and the policy of Austria.

Lord Stratford stands in the first rank, if not in the first place, among the diplomatists of the century; but his qualities were not those which are most commonly associated with diplomacy. Certainly no wise minister would have chosen him for the purpose of using language to conceal thoughts, or of threading his way through the mazes of a hesitating and ambiguous policy. Nor was he greatly skilled in the art of conciliating opposition, or turning aside anger by soft words. His power lay in his clear, prompt, and decisive

judgment; in the absolute fearlessness with which, in moments of danger and difficulty, he could assume a great responsibility; in the lofty patriotism and the indomitable will with which he pursued every enterprise he undertook; in his extraordinary power of swaying, dominating, and even overawing those with whom he came in contact. Seldom, indeed, has there been a man more clearly marked by nature as a king of men. Men might like him or dislike him, but it was scarcely possible to come into his presence without feeling his magnetic power, without recognising the commanding force both of his intellect and character.

My own knowledge of him dates only from the later years of his long life, when age had done much to mellow and soften his nature. What first struck all who then saw him was his rare personal beauty, retained, to a degree which I have only once seen equalled, to extreme old age. An excellent portrait of him by Watts is now in the National Portrait Gallery, but no picture could convey the charm of his manner, in which a stately dignity and an exqûisite courtesy were beautifully blended. He was a good classical scholar, and in his last years he fell back with pleasure on his Eton studies. He wrote much both in prose and verse, and though he took no active part in politics,

he was often consulted by leading statesmen. His strong will and his fervent religious belief supported him through many trials, and he appears to have escaped the restlessness which so often mars the retirement of men who have long played a great part in public affairs. It was indeed a calm and dignified old age, fitly crowning an illustrious career.

W. E. H. LECKY.

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PREFACE

Idealists are the makers of history. The record of the lives of the idealists of the world is the record of human progress. From the day when an idea first dawns on the mind of a man to the time when it absorbs his thoughts, commands his actions, and binds him down to such unceasing toil as shall work out its expression in the lives and thought of the men of his generation, the history of his life becomes a part of the history of the world. An interest arises in the steps by which he rose, in the friends who assisted him, in the enemies who opposed him. Men seek to learn the secret of his success. They see him erect in the midst of peril and responsibility, unscathed in the midst of desertion or calumny. Personal considerations do not affect him, for his concern is with the end he has in view; he has seen what others have not seen, and he is "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

The leading idea in the life of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe was the reformation of Turkey. He was forty-six years of age before it occurred to him as a future possibility, and it was not till ten years later that he was able to devote himself to working it out. Then he spent sixteen years of his life in reforming and developing an empire which should be worthy of the friendship and protection of England. He taught the Turks that the support of England would be given where it was deserved. By word and by deed he showed them that the origin of a privilege lay in merit, that the foundation of a right was in work accomplished. Against him was the Mussulmans' belief in fate, in chance, in a hidden incomprehensible power, the arbitrator of human things—a belief which led them to accept existing conditions, without hope or effort to modify them. With a strong power of will, he held himself faithful to his purpose of elevating their ideas and reforming their administration. He did not proclaim the thought which directed his actions: it remained an unconscious factor in his life, but at the same time it was its inspiration and its object. Neither difficulty nor sentiment could alter his purpose. His decisions were of no arbitrary character; they were built on a number of contingent facts, and

the Turks learnt to look upon them as Kismet—as the dictates of Fate.

The Elchi's name became a talisman in the East for the redress of wrong and for the maintenance of right. Turks and Greeks, Mussulmans and Christians, learnt that if Lord Stratford could only hear their grievances, justice would not be beyond their hope. They learnt that he could realise the weight of the oppression that they had to bear; that he could feel the extent of the injustice from which they suffered. He did not view them from his own point of view, but had the power of putting himself in their position.

It took years of patient labour to attain his wide-spread influence. Night and day the ambassador was at work, and step by step he had to win his way.

In Homer, we read, there are before the throne of Zeus two caskets, each charged with the destinies of men; but, whilst one is filled with unmixed woe, the other has only mixed contents. No one but the recipient knows the pain with which its joys are tempered. The very success which crowned the long life of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe provoked that form of envy which has the power to mar the highest of enterprises. At the close of his labours that support which

was neceseary for their completion was withheld, and there followed such disappointment as is known only to those who, having laid hold of the ideal, find it fade from their grasp. Reform, though sanctioned in theory, was banished in effect. No efforts were to be made for its realisation. The dream which had been so near its fulfilment began to contrast strangely with the reality, and then vanished. But to Lord Stratford there remained that confidence which never forsakes those whose work is based on a true belief that the facts of the history of the future would testify to the rightness of his principles, and would justify the wisdom of his policy.

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LORD STRATFORD DE REDCLIFFE

I

EARLY DAYS. MINISTER-PLENIPOTENTIARY

1786–1810

In the church of St. Mary Redcliffe at Bristol lies buried Sir William Canyngs, described in the annals of the city as its Mayor and Member in the fifteenth century. He ended his days as Dean of the College of the Benedictines, in which order he and his forefathers had been enrolled. To a descendant of this family—a certain George Canning—was made the grant of the Manor of Garvagh in Ulster, and from him was descended Stratford Canning, first of the name, known in his later days as Counsellor Canning.

The Counsellor lived in retirement. He was stern and austere by nature, and his children remembered the terror with which they heard the creaking of his shoes about the house. Two of his

sons he disowned. The eldest, who had displeased his father by an imprudent marriage, died young, soon after the birth of his son, the well-known minister and orator, the Right Honourable George Canning. The youngest, and favourite son, Stratford, was also disowned, for he too had married without his father's consent, and the old Counsellor remained inexorable.

Under these circumstances, Stratford Canning came over to England with his wife, and they settled in London. There, in St. Clement's Lane, in the heart of the City, in the year 1786, their youngest son, Stratford Canning, the future ambassador, was born. Six months after his birth his father died, and from that time Mrs. Canning filled the place of father as well as of mother to the children, carrying on her husband's work until her eldest son was able to take it up. The family lived at Wanstead. George Canning, her husband's nephew, had a home at her house, and Fox and Sheridan were among her friends. Before Stratford was nine years of age, George Canning took him to Eton, where he was placed below the "Nonsense Form"—so called because in it Latin verse was taught by unconnected words. To the end of his life, Lord Stratford remembered the fagging then in vogue, and described the "evils of the system as greatly preponderating over the advantages." As a school-boy, he was prone to indulge in solitary musings; poetic association in history or in legend attracted him; boys who were

his equals in the ordinary range of Eton subjects would refer to him as to a critic and superior. From being captain of the school he was elected scholar of King's College, Cambridge. But his college course was interrupted by the offer of an appointment as Précis writer at the Foreign Office. The précis consisted of summaries of the correspondence carried on between the Secretary of State and the diplomatic agents employed under him abroad.

George Canning was then at the head of the Foreign Office. One Sunday shortly after his appointment, Stratford met him in town, and walked with him to his house in Bruton Street. "You are just the man I wanted," said his cousin, and at once set him down to write a despatch for him at his dictation. The younger man suggested an alteration. "Write what I tell you," said the minister, and Stratford wrote his first despatch. It was George Canning's famous answer to Napoleon, proving to him that he could not hope to discourage the Spanish insurgents by the news of his negotiations with England.

More than seventy years after, when, as an old man, Lord Stratford recalled this scene of his early introduction into official life, he could see again the minister pacing the room, his black hair, his overhanging brow, his penetrating eyes, and the handsome outline of his thin and slightly-freckled face. And with a momentary return to the vigour of

youth, Lord Stratford repeated by heart the words of his first despatch. In recalling the memory of that Sunday so many years ago, the secret of his success reappeared in him. His life was one with his work.

Before he was twenty years of age he was appointed secretary to Mr. Adair's Mission to Constantinople, and embarked with them on their voyage of three thousand miles by sea. On approaching the entrance of the Bosphorus, he was touched with that sense of fascination which travellers used to feel when, sailing into its deep blue waters from the Sea of Marmora, they saw for the first time the imperial city of Constantine before them, with the domes and minarets of its stately palaces and mosques glistening in the sunshine. To the left are the seven towers and the Seraglio point, whilst down by the water's edge is the Sultan's palace. The broad stream of the Golden Horn runs up as a bay into the centre of the city, separating the hill of Pera from Stamboul.

On the Pera side of the bay, the European quarter of the city, is the landing-place of the port. Above it is the large square where Turks and Greeks, Armenians and Bulgarians, and people of all nationalities came to buy and sell at their stalls. A steep, narrow thoroughfare, with loose stones and deep holes, frequented by the wild dogs of the street, leads up from the noisy square to the

hill of Pera above. There stood the palace of the British Embassy, and there, in 1809, Mr. Adair's Mission took up their quarters.

Canning's interest was quickly roused in the Turks and in the condition of their empire. In 1809 he wrote to George Canning: "I am myself a daily witness of the personal qualities of the inhabitants, qualities which, if properly directed, are capable of sustaining them against a world of enemies. But the government is radically bad, and its members who are at all alive to its defects, have neither the wisdom nor the courage to reform it. The few who have the courage equal to the task know not how to reconcile reformation with the prejudices of the people. And without this nothing can be effected. . . . The seat of corruption is in the government itself."

Before he was twenty-four years of age, Canning was appointed temporary Minister-Plenipotentiary at the Porte. In accepting this appointment he had to sacrifice all his own inclinations for England and English political life, but his regrets were soon absorbed in work. Foremost his immediate attention was required by the French privateers, who captured the English merchant vessels and brought them into the nearest Turkish ports, there to plunder them undisturbed. Their piracies continued, and the minister renewed his remonstrances. "All was to no purpose," he wrote; "our merchants suffered, our enemies were emboldened." Notwithstand-

ing the delays and vacillations with which the Porte met his representations, he continued his endeavours to restore friendly relations between the two countries, and was untiring in his efforts to convince the Turks that England was their friend. It was, however, all very well for England to have the interests of the Porte at heart, but there must be reciprocal feeling on the side of Turkey. Assurances of it were offered him, but how could he believe them in the face of the outrages on the British vessels at which the Porte connived ?

The Reis Efendi (the Turkish Foreign Minister) was shrewd enough to perceive the difficulty which arose from the minister's desire to act a friendly part and at the same time to protect the British vessels, and suggested to him, with affectionate regard, that he was losing his time about trifles, when he might be helping to bring about peace between Turkey and Russia. "The Turk," wrote Dean Stanley, "urged him to forego these interests for the moment in order that he might negotiate for peace with Russia, and for that purpose to postpone 'these little things' to some more opportune time." The young English diplomatist paused for a moment, and then said, "Nothing which concerns the greatness of England is little." Though he recognised the importance of the overture made him, he felt that he could not hope to remove the obstacles to success unless he first carried his point.

When conciliation and threats proved equally unavailing, he determined on an "act of decision" which made the Reis Efendi furious. He called upon the commander of the British force in the Archipelago to take the law into his own hands. Captain Hope was nothing loth. He entered the port of Napoli di Romania, and demanded the restitution of the vessels piratically detained under the guns of that fortress. The privateer captain ran the prizes ashore and burned them; shots were fired by our corvette, but the fortress was mute; and it remained to be seen what effect would be produced at Constantinople.

The Reis Efendi refused to do or say anything until satisfaction had been given for the violation of a Turkish port, and threatened to complain direct to the English Government. The minister justified his action. He had gained some insight into Turkish character, and knew that, however much the Reis Efendi might fume, he would in the end give way. Three weeks of suspense followed. One day the Porte would seem to relent, the next day it would revive its air of offended dignity. But the Turks needed the British minister's mediation to make their peace with Russia, and they finally gave in. Canning accepted their overtures conditionally on the firmans for the protection of British ships being first granted. Constant vigilance would still be required on his part; but the enactment had been made, and that was the point.

II

TREATY OF BUCHAREST

1810–1813

During the two years that Canning was Minister-Plenipotentiary at the Porte, Napoleon was at the full height of his military power. It was the British minister's endeavour to defeat the French Emperor's policy in the East by bringing over Turkey and Russia to the interests of England. But the Porte was at war with Russia, and so at first was England, at least formally; and the first step towards gaining the adherence of Russia and Turkey to England was the promotion of peace between the two countries. War between the Porte and Russia was as much in the interest of France as peace between them was in the interest of England. By flattery, by cajolery, by promises, Napoleon urged the Sultan to continue the war. Canning knew the importance of releasing Russia from the war, so as to leave her free to use her whole resources against Bonaparte; but though his instructions included the furtherance of this peace, he had only his own personal credit to use in their support.

He was diffident as to his own powers, and anxious for advice; but for two years the home authorities left him without any instruction, and he felt each day the growing burden of his responsibility. Again and again he appealed to them, even at the risk of importunity, but month after month he had to admit to the Turks that he had received no instructions from his government.

The minister's personal influence, however, began to tell upon the Porte. The Turks were clever enough to recognise his intellectual abilities, and in spite of their habitual suspicion, they began to perceive that he was loyal and straightforward. They had also learnt to distrust the assurances of France. "The Porte has too often been deceived by France," said the Reis Efendi, "ever to trust her again." As one scheme after another came to light for the partition of their country, the Turks perceived that whether or no there was war between France and Russia, Turkey would have to pay the cost of victory, or be the bribe of coalition. Impervious as the Turks were to reason, they began at last to perceive the advantages of peace, but they still held to their rigid determination never to part with "an inch of land." Canning knew that nothing less than some sacrifice of land would satisfy the Russian claim; but notwithstanding the defeat of the Grand Vizier, the Turks doggedly refused to take part in any conference which might include the mere idea of any

cession of territory. Even when the troops clamoured for peace and the Janissaries refused to advance, the Sultan would not yield. It was not till February 1812 that the Porte requested Canning's mediation. Napoleon took the opportunity to write to "the Great Emperor of the Mussulmans," and to make proposals on behalf of France. In order to counteract his influence, and to convince the Porte of the advantages of peace, the British minister had resort to an expedient which he had long held in reserve. He had in his possession a plan for invading Turkey, which had been prepared prospectively at Vienna, and which had been drawn up with a view to partitioning the Ottoman Empire. "This alarming and unprincipled paper," he wrote, "I conveyed in the most impressive manner to the Reis Efendi, and the effect it produced was fully equal to my expectation."

The discovery of such important information so long held back was in itself of a kind to impress the Turks, but they also conjectured that he might have other resources in reserve. As soon as Canning felt that they were sufficiently impressed, he informed the Russian plenipotentiary of the intrigues of Persia and Austria against the Czar. Then Russia lowered her claims and agreed to accept the river Pruth, instead of the Sereth, as the boundary between the two empires. The final treaty included a modicum of cession which the Turks could never have got for themselves, yet

they suspected England of trying to force an unfavourable peace upon them, and bore a grudge against the mediator they had themselves chosen.

The Treaty of Bucharest was signed on May 22, 1812.

The Duke of Wellington described the inducing of the Porte to make this peace as "the most important service that ever fell to the lot of any individual to perform." He little suspected that his brother, the Marquis, had had no part in it. "This great service," wrote David Morier, "was effected by Stratford Canning, then plenipotentiary at Constantinople, without a word of instruction or even of notice, and still less of encouragement, from the Foreign Office, then fast asleep under the Marquis Wellesley."

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III

SWITZERLAND. THE VIENNA CONGRESS

1814–1819

Among the statesmen assembled in Paris in 1814 was Stratford Canning, the ex-minister. Whilst there he received from Lord Castlereagh the offer of the position of Envoy-Extraordinary and Minister-Plenipotentiary to Switzerland. The beauty of the country in which his new work lay roused his admiration, and the simplicity and independence which characterised its people won his sympathy. He appreciated every step which had been taken by them in their struggle for freedom.

Canning, however, was no visionary, and the most simple and idyllic people in the midst of the most beautiful scenery would not have satisfied him, unless he had real and responsible work to do. The affairs of the Swiss cantons were so complicated that it required his best energies to disentangle them. To bring the old and new cantons into unison with each other and to obtain their consent to an act of federation was his work as one of the envoys of the Allied Powers. When the consent of

the Swiss Congress should be gained, the Act was to be presented to the Congress of the Plenipotentiaries which was to meet at Vienna. Accordingly to Vienna Canning was summoned. It was in that city that he first met the Countess Waldstein.

Isabelle Waldstein was the wife of the Count to whom Beethoven dedicated the Waldstein Sonata, and in reading her letters it seems as though the great musician may have received his inspiration from the lady to whose husband he presented his homage. She was worthy of the devotion which so many of the Englishmen then gathered together in Vienna openly offered her. Among them, Canning stood foremost in her regard. Their thoughts and views were in sympathy, and their tastes were in common. Both were lovers of Nature. From a drawing-book which he had given her, Isabelle Waldstein gave him one of her sketches, which he treasured carefully, and which hung on the wall by his bedside to the day of his death.

There were other ladies of Zürich and Berne who expressed admiration for the British minister, but he was too reserved and too much engrossed in his work to allow of time or inclination for any relations but such romantic intercourse as that with the Countess Waldstein—one of those ideal relationships of mental devotion, by no means rare, which belong to the world invisible and to the "language of silence."

The Congress flagged, the people amused them-

selves, and the negotiations stood still. "Le Congrès dance, mais n'avance pas." It was the shock of Napoleon's escape from Elba that at last dispersed its members. "Our committee," wrote Canning. "got through their work with fair success. They concluded by adopting an Act of Federation, essentially the same as that presented by the Diet."

The momentous events of the summer, which culminated in the Battle of Waterloo, left no one leisure to attend to the affairs of Switzerland, but the cantons were gradually growing reconciled to the Federal compact. Such outstanding differences as remained might be left to time to settle. "Such tranquillity has but few charms for me," wrote Canning. ". . . I catch myself building castles, which prove but too plainly that with me contentment is the dream, and passion—for what else is ambition?—the reality."

In this mood he arrived in England in the spring of 1816, and in the following September returned to his mission with a bride—Harriet Raikes—the daughter of a governor of the Bank of England. The happiness of the young bride was of short duration, for in the following year she died.

Retirement and rustic diplomacy were not suited to Canning, even in the country of Switzerland, where he had declared he would like to live and die. He complained of having office without business, of restraint without occupation, and in 1819 he resigned his mission at Berne.

IV

UNITED STATES. MISSION TO ST. PETERSBURG

1820–1825

In the year 1820 Canning arrived as Minister-Plenipotentiary to the United States. John Quincy Adams was then Secretary of State. "Sir," said he to the British envoy, "it took us of late several years to go to war with you; renew these subjects of complaint, and it will not take us as many weeks." Conciliation was then the policy of the British Government. England had learnt by experience that the temper of the States was not to be trifled with, and she was determined not to be drawn into further hostilities by the trivial points of dispute which still existed. During the twenty-two months which Canning remained at Washington, his endeavours were to improve the relations between the two countries. Then he returned to England as plenipotentiary in connection with the matters in dispute, and whilst there he was offered the British Embassy at the Porte, but a preliminary mission to St. Petersburg was first necessary.

The Czar of Russia had recently come forward as

a mediator between the revolutionary Greeks and their Ottoman rulers. His religious and political sympathies were naturally with the Greeks; but he was also anxious to arrange the reconstruction of their country so that Russia might hold a protectorate over their people. With this object in view, he drew up a Russian memoir, and invited the Powers to meet in conference at St. Petersburg. The Sultan was indignant that a foreign sovereign should attempt to regulate the affairs of his Empire, and should propose its dismemberment as a subject for discussion. He asked, What would the Czar think of the interference of any Catholic sovereign in favour of Polish independence, or of the Sultan himself in favour of the Tartar Mohammedans? It was, however, urged that the Turks were always opposed to everything, and it was resolved to disregard their wishes. The St. Petersburg Conference was agreed to by all the Great Powers, and Stratford Canning was appointed to attend it as British plenipotentiary. But before he started, the contents of the Russian memoir leaked out. The Greeks were astonished to find the Emperor Alexander, in whom they had trusted, aiming a mortal blow at their national independence, and they appealed to the British Government for help. By the mere fact of answering their communication, George Canning recognised their right to secure their independence. But when he learnt that the Greeks, as well as the Turks, were protesting against the proposed media-

tion, he saw that the congress would prove futile, and refused to take any part in it. The Czar was angry, fancied he was suspected of selfish designs, and accused Mr. Canning of sympathy with the revolutionary spirit.

Partly to prevent misconception, it was decided that Stratford Canning should still go to St. Petersburg, but his duties were to be explanatory and interrogatory, and he was not to join the conference. He was also instructed to conclude a treaty defining the boundary between British and Russian territory in North America. In George Canning's instructions to his cousin, the following memorable definition of the foreign policy of England occurs: "To preserve the peace of the world is the leading object of the policy of England. For this purpose it is necessary in the first place to prevent to the utmost of our power the breaking out of new quarrels; in the second place to compose, where it can be done by friendly mediation, existing differences; and thirdly, where that is hopeless, to narrow as much as possible their range; and fourthly, to maintain for ourselves an imperturbable neutrality in all cases where nothing occurs to affect injuriously our interests or our honour."

The Greeks were seeking "unqualified independence;" the Turks required of them "unconditional surrender." For England it remained only to "narrow the range of existing differences;" and with this object Stratford Canning was instructed to

proceed to St. Petersburg by way of Vienna. At Vienna he was received by Prince Metternich and his two shadows, the Emperor of Austria and Gentz. "Of the three," he said, "I found Gentz the most reasonable, Metternich the most polite, and the Emperor the most sincere." His Majesty told him that, saving his presence, he had rather he had been sent to St. Petersburg by some other road. Metternich took the tone of "the Guardians of the peace of Europe." He considered intervention necessary whether the Greeks liked it or not, and believed their independence to be a chimera.

Nothing was to be gained by staying in Vienna, and Canning left for St. Petersburg, where he was courteously received by the Emperor Alexander. But the Greek question was not mentioned, for the Czar maintained a complete silence on the subject, and the Foreign Minister was equally reserved. Presently Nesselrode admitted, with regret, that he was not permitted to discuss the question unless the British minister were instructed to join the congress. "Otherwise," he said, "any discussion would be totally useless." Canning thereupon turned his attention to the treaty on hand, and as soon as this was concluded he proposed to leave. But Nesselrode was anxious to learn what had been his instructions, and could not let him go without exchanging views on the subject of Greece. "It would move you to tears," wrote Stratford Canning to his cousin, "to hear Count Nesselrode describe

his surprise and his disappointment at finding that I was to take no part in the conferences. You had shown yourself so willing, he said, in the first instance, rather anticipating his wishes than waiting to be goaded, and then to change in a moment, and all for a letter in bad Greek from a fellow who has since been turned out of office—it was too much—he could not have believed it!"

In April 1825, when he took his audience of leave of the Imperial Family, he was particularly pleased with the Emperor's mother and the beautiful Grand-Duchess Hélène. Of the Emperor's brother he wrote, "The Grand-Duke Nicholas had the character of a martinet, but I had no opportunity of forming my own opinion of him."[1]

[1] This remark is important as disproving the report that Nicholas' dislike of Canning arose out of a quarrel in St. Petersburg. The two had only met once in their lives: that was at a formal reception, in 1814, at Paris.

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V

THE LIBERATION OF GREECE

1825–1826

"Mr. Stratford Canning, one of England's ablest diplomatists," wrote George Finlay, "arrived at Constantinople as Ambassador to the Porte early in 1826, with the delicate mission of inducing the Sultan to put an end to the war in Greece, and of preventing war from breaking out between Russia and Turkey." This time he had not come out alone. In September 1825 he had married Miss Alexander of Summerhill, Tonbridge, and the ambassador and his young bride had travelled to Constantinople by way of Paris and Florence. On the journey out he had taken steps to afford the Greeks an opportunity of laying their views before him, and at the little island of Hydra had been interviewed by two of their leading patriots. They described their resources as exhausted, their hopes as declining, their hatred of the Turks as inextinguishable. They desired a total separation of the Greek and Turkish population, but they were also ready to consent to something short of that

independence on which they had insisted before, and they were now prepared to consent to pay tribute to the Turks. The proposals thus made unofficially to the ambassador resulted in the St. Petersburg Protocol, which was afterwards incorporated into the Treaty of London. It was not without reason that the Sultan had endeavoured to separate the cause of the Greek revolution from the cause of the Orthodox Church; for by constituting themselves the representatives of Eastern Christianity, the Greeks had won the sympathies of England and other Christian nations against the Ottoman Turks, who had invaded Europe as the apostles of the religion of Mohammed.

The continued victories of the Greeks had gained for their country the position of an independent state, and it was no longer possible for the Sultan to look upon the revolution as that of a few rebellious rayahs. But Mahmud's indomitable will and industry began to take effect in 1824, and when the resources of the Greeks were exhausted he found himself able to replace the ships and soldiers he had lost. The Turkish standpoint was simple and straightforward. "It is not to be endured," wrote the Reis Efendi, "that the Christian powers of Europe should, without any right but that which their collective strength gives them, prepare and proclaim to the world a scheme for the dismemberment of an empire which has uniformly endeavoured to be at peace with them, and to

avoid giving the smallest cause of offence. In what treaty is it specified that the sovereigns of Europe are to assemble and quietly to carve out the Turkish dominions at their pleasure because the Christian subjects of His Highness choose to rebel against him? And on what ground is it pretended to justify this monstrous pretension? Because, forsooth, the Turkish arms have not yet succeeded in quelling the rebellion. Whose fault is this? Are we only contending with our open and armed enemies the Greeks? Are we not also contending against those secret and insidious foes, who, while they profess friendship for us and soothe us with kind words, are constantly supplying those who have sworn to exterminate us and our religion with arms, and money, and counsel, and succours of every description?"

Europe, however, had resolved to free the Greeks. Statesmen, as well as poets and enthusiasts, had agreed that Greece should never again be under the Turkish yoke, and Stratford Canning was sent out to secure that end.

The usual compliments had been exchanged; the chief dragoman had brought his forty-five trays of flowers, fruit, and sweetmeats; richly-caparisoned horses had been transferred from the Imperial stables to those of the Embassy, and presents from the British Government were flying about Constantinople, when the ambassador pressed for a confidential interview with the Reis Efendi; and

after the usual demurs it was granted. In a conversation of five hours he used every peaceful argument which his experience could suggest. He had to convince the Turks that England was not committed to the other Powers, just when Lord Strangford at St. Petersburg had blundered into the contrary statement; and as George Canning expressed it, had "cut the ground from under Stratford Canning's feet." The Reis Efendi considered that the subject of Greece could not become a proper subject of discussion on the part of the Sultan's servants, and he assured the ambassador it was contrary to the sovereign dignity and to the holy religion of the Sultan even to reply to the mere suggestion of foreign interference in what was purely a domestic matter.

Notwithstanding foreign remonstrances and internal rebellions, notwithstanding the destruction by fire of his arsenal and artillery and the loss of his fleet, the Sultan never wavered. The Greeks were his subjects; they had rebelled, and they must be brought to submission. That was his policy, and by that he stood.

It was clear that other arguments must be employed. The atrocities of the Egyptians in the Morea, the wholesale massacres and enslavings, the hundreds of ears nailed over the Seraglio gate, formed a new basis of remonstrance; but the Reis Efendi would deny some reports, call others exaggerations, and finally retort that the Greeks were

as bad themselves. This was unhappily true enough. George Canning suggested pressing the commercial grievances, but the difficulty of using this argument was that the pirates were for the most part Greeks.

The ambassador strove hard to lead his cousin to do something more or less coercive, "just short of war;" but so far he had not succeeded. Unexpectedly an ultimatum arrived from Russia conveying a threat of war. The Turks immediately agreed to the three points of the ultimatum, but they remained stubborn on the subject of Greece, and the Russians treated the Greek question as secondary. At this juncture a new and tremendous change took place in the military organisation of Turkey.

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VI

CONFERENCE OF POROS

1826–1831

It was in the year 1826 that Mahmud felt himself sufficiently established to introduce an ordinance of reforms into the corps of the Janissaries. These were so necessary that he was supported by the great body of his Mussulman subjects. He had foreseen the rebellion that followed, and was prepared with an overwhelming force to suppress it. The sacred banner of Mohammed was unfurled, the Grand-Mufti excommunicated the Janissaries, and an overwhelming force was collected against them. The entrance to the Seraglio, the shore, and the sea itself, were crowded with their dead bodies. The Janissaries were exterminated, yet no one raised a remonstrance or uttered a protest.

A regular army had now to be formed, and the Sultan set about it in good earnest. He took an active part in training the new battalions; he employed European officers to instruct them, and assisted in person at their exercises. The old military genius of Turkey seemed to have sprung

into fresh life. When England, France, and Russia at last agreed to carry out the Protocol of St. Petersburg at the Treaty of London, Canning did not see how it could be used to bring the Sultan to terms. "The treaty is good," he said, "but it should have come sooner." "Put your shoulder to the Greek treaty," the Elchi wrote to Lord Dudley, "and enable me to carry it through with acclamation. If not, good my lord, pray let me go."

It was not till the summer of 1827 that the Greek treaty was concluded, and then the Allies sent three squadrons to shelter Greece from invasion by sea. The Reis Efendi, however, refused to admit the treaty. It was left in his room, he admitted, but he had not even taken the trouble to have it translated. The Turks, he said, "would resist to the last man and the last drop of their blood."

Sir Edward Codrington was in command of the English fleet, and he had sailed from England with the famous motto, "Go it, Ned," said to have been in his thoughts as well as in the margin of his instructions; and he and his colleagues resolved to steer with their combined forces into the harbour of Navarino, where the Turkish fleet was anchored. The inevitable collision followed, and most of the Sultan's ships were at the bottom of the bay. Mahmud was furious, and held the ambassadors responsible. They could plead that the first shot had been fired by the Turks, but they knew that

to take so large a fleet into a port already occupied was not only a breach of courtesy, but a direct provocation to the battle. Unsubdued by the loss of his fleet, Mahmud remained as adamant on the subject of Greece, and his ministers were forced to hold out. The ambassadors might plead what positive instructions they pleased, the Sultan's were "from the Almighty," and could not be disobeyed. The continuance of this attitude brought about the withdrawal of the three embassies from Turkey.

The death of George Canning had deprived the Greeks of their warmest advocate in England, and the measures taken to coerce the Turks became timid and dilatory. Mr. Canning had entered into the Greek question with enthusiasm, and had wished to carry out the July treaty to the fullest extent for the benefit of the Greeks. His successor at the Foreign Office, Lord Aberdeen, thought of executing the treaty as far as he was absolutely bound, but sought to give it the smallest scope compatible with its engagements. The one took up the business with his whole heart, the other as an awkward inheritance from a previous government. Fortunately for the Greeks, France decided to take action; and Marshal Maison was despatched with twenty thousand men. Meanwhile the ambassadors of the three Powers who signed the Treaty of 1827 were to meet and draw up a plan for the settlement of Greece. The principal

point was the frontier line. That proposed by Canning was not approved by the French ambassador, who brought forward geographical reasons why it should be extended to the mountain range of Thessaly, and Canning agreed to this amendment. The French and Russian governments approved the frontier recommended by the ambassadors, but Lord Aberdeen wrote that he considered the separation of the Morea as "a sufficient execution of the treaty." Canning was blamed for coming to conclusions different from those of his government, who did not seem to realise that he was acting under a conference of allies, from whose instructions he had no power to depart.

Under these circumstances he asked himself how could he continue to represent a government with whose views he was at variance? He wrote to Lord Aberdeen the only terms on which he could proceed to Constantinople: that the Allies should agree on a fixed settlement of the Greek question, and that he should be called upon merely to act with his colleagues in placing before the Porte a decision on which he had to express no opinion, and for which he had to employ no personal pressure. Lord Aberdeen replied: "It would undoubtedly be too much to expect from you that you should labour with zeal to destroy at Constantinople what you had constructed with so much pains at Poros, yet this will be the main object of the British minister, so far as the question

of limits is concerned. I therefore can entertain no doubt that, according to the condition specified in your letter, you would not feel yourself disposed to attempt the performance of such a duty as would be imposed upon you at Constantinople. I have thus in consequence considered your letter as a conditional resignation. . . . My brother, Sir R. Gordon, will therefore leave London immediately, and will proceed from Naples to Constantinople. I could certainly have wished that the whole of this question should have been concluded by yourself, and that you might have found it consistent with your views to have assisted in the execution of the wishes of the government, but I am perfectly willing to do justice to the motives by which you have been influenced. . . ."

Canning crushed this letter underfoot, and thanked God that the government had not asked him to do such work as they had given to his successor. His acquiescence followed as a matter of course. In writing to Planta he says, "The true object of regret is not that I escape returning to Constantinople to play a double part—to eat my words, and afterwards to take part in a wretched result, or to be suspected of not having been zealous enough in trying to bring it about; but that government takes such a line in the business as to make it impossible for me to continue the negotiation."

For three years the Greek question knew him no

more. He returned to England and attained his long desire for Parliamentary work. It was not till 1831, when Lord Palmerston took over the command of the Foreign Office, that he was sent on a special mission to Constantinople to obtain additional extent of territory for Greece. He did not return a moment too soon; he was received with enthusiasm. The patriots one and all hailed him as the saviour of their country. "You seem, at all events," wrote Lord Palmerston, "to have established union amongst the Residents (*i.e.*, foreign representatives). The conference were delighted with what you did in the Morea."

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VII

SPECIAL MISSION—FOURTH MISSION

1832–1842

The Elchi was well received at Constantinople, but he found the Sultan and his ministers still resolute as before on the subject of Greece. To sell any portion of the land acquired by their ancestors was to the Turks a shame and a sacrilege, and the Greeks were the last people to whom they would make this sacrifice. The negotiations were carried on amidst reiterated cavil and complaint; and even after the Sultan had been convinced of the necessity of yielding, the Foreign Minister declared that he would sooner cut off his right hand than put his name to such a convention, and for fifteen hours at a sitting he held out; then in weariness and disgust he gave in and wrote the required signature.

As soon as the object of his mission was accomplished, Canning prepared to take leave of the Sultan. Though his mediation on behalf of the Greeks had been sufficient to preclude any sympathy between him and the Turkish Government, his intercourse with the Sultan during the negotiation had

become more intimate and more confidential. He felt more kindly towards Mahmud, and sympathised with his efforts to reform his government.

After the audience of leave, Canning never saw him again; but the remembrance of this parting interview remained with him to the end of his life. It was Mahmud who had shown him the possibility of Turkish reform, and in whose efforts had lain the germ of that policy for which the Elchi afterwards laboured for sixteen consecutive years. Meanwhile he returned to England, and for ten years he had no voice in Turkish affairs.

At the close of this mission, general satisfaction was expressed in England when Sir Stratford Canning was given the G.C.B., and was gazetted Ambassador to all the Russias. But the Nemesis which attends success here claimed her toll in a very unexpected form. Nicholas, the Czar, though favourably disposed towards England, refused to receive Canning as England's ambassador. It is probable that Planta, of the Foreign Office, divined the real reason when he wrote that the Czar did not want an ambassador who was thoroughly acquainted with the policy of Russia. Eventually the dispute had to be compromised by appointing no ambassador for a time to St. Petersburg.

When Sir Robert Peel came into power in 1841, Sir Stratford Canning accepted an offer of a return to his old embassy at the Porte, and in 1842 he went out again to the Bosphorus, there to make for

himself an influence and a position unparalleled in the history of diplomacy.

He found the character of the place, the people, the Porte itself altered. The loss of Greece, the humiliation of the Treaty of Adrianople, the war with Egypt, and the triumphant march of Mohammed Ali across Syria, had broken the spirit of the Sultan, and the man who had so resolutely planned a new era for his people had just lived to see his hopes extinguished, and had then closed his eyes in welcome death, that he might not see the dismemberment of his empire. The Great Sultan was dead, and an amiable and irresolute youth reigned in his stead. The young prince, though swayed to and fro by divergent counsels, held true to his father's desire for reform, and remained stanch to its chief European advocate.

By degrees the intercourse between the Sultan and the Elchi attained the character of personal affection, and when diplomacy failed, this friendship was the ambassador's final resource. His relations with the Turkish Ministry were not so satisfactory. Their ablest minister, Reshid Pasha, had brought about his own downfall by attempting too rapid and sweeping reforms, which had been followed by a dangerous reaction against European interference. The policy of the government was fanatical as well as reactionary. The subsequent downfall of the Ministry was largely Canning's work, but it was more than three years before it was accomplished.

The general state of the empire was such as might be expected from the existing government. Bulgaria, Albania, and Servia were in revolt, and the misgovernment of Wallachia invited Russian intervention. Christian peasants were executed without trial, the pashas acted at random, and the soldiers mutinied for their pay. Violence and torture were employed in the law courts, the evidence of Christians was not accepted, and constant cases of fraud and outrage against them occurred. In spite of these circumstances, the rayahs were increasing in wealth, numbers, and independence, whilst the Turks were correspondingly declining. Revolution was not unlikely to follow. Lord Aberdeen wrote to advise "active but friendly interference in the interests of Turkey and Europe." But the Turkish ministers were not ready to welcome intervention, and their opposition made the position of English adviser to the Sultan both trying and irksome.

In addition, Canning had serious difficulties to encounter in his own relations with the Porte. His first duty, as ambassador, was the protection of British interests, and he would not undertake to advise the Sultan in the interests of Turkey unless the grievances of the British subjects were first redressed. In addition to the purely English claims, there were a large class of protected subjects who appealed for protection to the British ambassador. There were natives of Malta and of the Ionian Isles,

who claimed the privileges of British citizens, though not subject to English laws; and amongst them were some who sought the protection of England to cover their crimes. There were miscreants who fought in the streets or stabbed in the dark, and then fled to the embassy for safety. In places where there was no American consul, the British ambassador's protection was needed for the citizens of the United States. In Pera itself there were Greek artisans who could obtain security only through his intervention. Dutch Jews in Syria looked to him for the satisfaction of their wrongs. The long-continued persecution of the Armenians was ended at his instance; and the Nestorians of Mesopotamia, victims of a cruel oppression, found an untiring advocate in him. Gradually his influence spread into the far-reaching provinces of the empire, and from the wildest parts of Asiatic Turkey people of all classes and many religions would appeal for protection to the Padishah of the Padishah, or the Sultan of the Sultan, the name which was given to the British ambassador at Pera by the Christian subjects of the Porte.

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VIII

THE ELCHI

The Turks were not in sympathy with the Elchi's theories of reform, and the ministers, while accepting his offices in bringing the Greeks to reason, could not forget the prominent part he had taken in the emancipation of Greece. They remembered that he had come to protect the despised rayahs, and this was no passport to their regard. They had no faith in his scheme of equal citizenship for Christians. Moreover, they felt humbled if his dictates were too apparent, and they were sometimes conscious that it was from a feeling of fear that they succumbed to him. The ministers, except Reshid, were almost in terror at a personal visit from the ambassador; and when he entered the Porte, it was the Grand-Vizier himself who would hasten to meet his inexorable visitor. But they learnt that what he said was true, and that he honestly wished them well. They listened to him and obeyed him, because they felt he was their friend. The personal ascendency which he thus gained over the Turks was such as to raise

him into a position different from that of all other ambassadors.

In addition to this, the Elchi belonged to a time when the foreign representatives of England were much more independent of the home authorities than they have been since. When he began his diplomatic career, his communications with the Secretary of State were slow and occasional. To receive an answer to a request for instructions involved a delay of four months, and by the time the instructions arrived the crisis for which they were required would in all probability be past. The minister had thus been compelled to use his own judgment; and, partly in consequence of the distance from home, partly because the Foreign Office left him unnoticed during his earliest mission, he acquired the habit of acting on his own responsibility. In addition to these independent habits, he knew too much of departments, and barely concealed his contempt for them.

In general the Elchi treated his attachés with something of the discipline of a military commander, and the better sort amongst them liked it. It was known that, hard as he worked his men, he worked harder himself. If Mr. Hay had to copy despatches for thirty hours, Sir Stratford was writing the drafts all the time. When he kept Mr. Odo Russell, on his arrival at Constantinople, hard at work for six weeks, he shared his imprisonment and worked at his side. At times he forgot

that young men might not possess his power of endurance and of work, and few of them could toil as he toiled. Rising at five or six every morning, Sir Stratford would sit down to the long pile of petitions from various quarters, which lay on his table, requiring immediate attention. The petitions being duly docketed with instructions, the correspondence began, and often lasted through the greater part of the day. In times of great pressure, it was often morning before the last signature was subscribed. At six o'clock, nevertheless, he was again at work. Though his attachés complained of the amount of work he required of them, they knew that if once a man found favour in the ambassador's eyes, and did his work well, Canning would be stanch and loyal to him to the end. No one under his orders ever suffered from lack of support. Whatever error there might be, Canning took the responsibility of his subordinate, and each man, attaché or consul, knew that he could depend upon his chief's support, even against the Foreign Office. But he had his preferences, and his first likings seldom changed. People said that he looked them through. Instead of the easy, frank, unsuspicious air which a diplomatist should employ, Canning, said Titov, the Russian ambassador, appeared to be gazing right into your soul, where he evidently expected to find something very disagreeable.

Few ambassadors have been served by an abler

or more brilliant circle of men, and his staff included from time to time men of such varied attainments as Percy Smythe (Lord Strangford), Lord Stanley of Alderley, Lord Napier and Ettrick, Lord Zouche, Lord Cowley, Odo Russell (Lord Ampthill), Sir J. Drummond Hay. To their abilities much of the success which marked Canning's career at Constantinople was due; but though he needed clever and supple minds to work out his measures, the ideas originated with him, and owed their effect to his resolution and perseverance. He alone dreamed of a regenerated Turkey, where Christian and Mussulman alike should resist, shoulder to shoulder, the encroachments of Russia. He would make the continuance of the Ottoman Empire possible by making it European, and would thus save Turkey in spite of herself. Whatever made for this goal found in him a firm advocate. An equitable pasha, a wise minister, a single-minded colleague feared no opposition from him. But a Turkish minister who returned to the old Ottoman ways was doomed to fall. Should the French ambassador seek to increase his prestige by supporting the Turks in any policy hostile to reform, that ambassador would probably be recalled. A pasha who refused to execute the laws passed at Canning's instigation would lose his post. All this was in the pursuance of a policy which for sixteen years he followed faithfully, both in the adjustment of individual grievances and in the conduct of national policy.

In spite of obstacles, and with or without assistance, he pursued the path which he had marked out for himself and for the empire over which he dominated.

To the Turks this immovable resolution carried with it something of destiny. "If what he directed was inconsistent with the nature of things, then possibly the nature of things would be changed by the decree of Heaven. . . . In the meantime, however, and by the blessing of God, the actual execution of the ambassador's painful mandates might perhaps be suffered to encounter a little delay." Delay was the one form of opposition which Canning found it hardest to overcome. But by degrees he succeeded in imposing upon the Sultan and his ministers the idea of a new Turkey—an empire worthy to take a place in the councils of European states.

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IX

REFORM

1843–1848

The law of Mohammed prescribed that a Christian subject who had adopted the Mussulman faith and afterwards recanted and returned to the Christian Church should be executed; and this law was said to be based upon the Koran.

On one occasion the ambassador's carriage was intercepted by Armenians, who implored his intervention on behalf of a young relative who had thus offended and had been sentenced to death. Notwithstanding the ambassador's efforts on his behalf, the unfortunate young Armenian was executed. But his death was not without effect, and on Canning's report of the case he was authorised by his government to require of the Porte that punishment should not be inflicted on seceders from the Mohammedan religion. The Grand-Vizier declared that personally he had not the heart to kill a fowl, and that his sentiments were in accord with the ambassador's, but that the law of the Koran was inexorable, and that the execution was

a misfortune for which there was no remedy. The Foreign Minister expressed equally humane and equally discouraging opinions, and maintained that "a law prescribed by God Himself was not to be set aside by any human power."

Canning turned to the Koran to search for the grounds of this law, and discovered that the holy writings contained no specific ordinance for the execution of apostates. This knowledge increased his zeal, and, after a long colloquy, the Porte so far gave way as to exchange notes on the subject, and, after much pressure, gave an undertaking that such barbarities should not recur. The ambassador's zealous and energetic protests had had their effect on the slow Ottoman diplomacy, and his private communications with the Sultan clinched the matter.

Fortified by his victory, he obtained, before two months had passed, a notable firman, by which the use of torture was abolished throughout the empire. Thus, in 1844, the Porte was compelled, against its will, to abolish executions for apostasy, as well as the use of torture, thereby showing that Ottoman independence was over, and that Turkey could be made to conduct its affairs according to the general view of Europe.

In carrying forward his reforms the ambassador owed much to the support and friendship of Reshid Pasha. His co-operation was invaluable, whether in the appointment of trustworthy governors to the

provincial districts, or in the recruiting of the army without reference to religion, or in the abolition of the rayah capitation tax, on the formation of Ottoman regiments officered by Englishmen. Reshid also helped forward the improvement of the police, the establishment of colleges for education in the cities, the obtaining of a level position for Christian and Mohammedan evidence. There was much to deplore in the finances, taxes, coinage, roads or lack of roads, frontier lines, and in all other matters of administration in Turkey, but there was also reason to rejoice in present progress, and room for hope as to future improvements.

In 1842, Mr. Austin Layard had arrived at the Porte, and Canning had employed him in tours of observation in the disturbed provinces. Deeply interested in his reports suggestive of buried cities in Mesopotamia, the ambassador despatched him, in 1845, at his own expense, to explore the sites. There followed an important series of discoveries by him and Alison, the Oriental Secretary, and Sir Charles Newton. The sculptures of the mausoleum, embedded in the walls of the fortress at Budrum, were transferred by the Elchi to the British Museum. The inscription on the frieze reads: "Given by Sultan Abdu-l-Mejid to Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, by whom it was presented to the Trustees of the British Museum, 1846."

After five years of arduous work at the Porte Canning had a short interval of leisure; but before

he could return to his post, he was deputed to visit the courts of Central Europe, and sound their views in connection with the general uneasiness felt. The storm which broke in 1848 was threatening, and a tried diplomatist was required, and the envoy selected was Sir Stratford Canning. He found one capital after another a prey to bands of students, soldiers, and mobs, who paraded the streets. Vienna was in revolt, Berlin was a scene of massacre and anarchy. In Greece, the attempt which Lord Palmerston instructed Canning to make, in order to bring King Otho and his subjects to reason, proved impracticable, and it took fourteen years more to get rid of the king. During that time Greece remained a thorn in the side of Europe.

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X

THE REVOLT OF THE RAYAHS

1848–1852

The Turks of the Mussulman Empire numbered some twenty-one millions, and they spread far away over the distant provinces of Asia and Africa. In Europe alone there were about two million Turks, and subject to them were some fifteen millions of the conquered people of the country. These were the Christian subjects of the Porte—rayahs, as they were called. They paid tribute to their Ottoman conquerors, and they were allowed separate districts in the towns, apart from the Mussulmans. For at least two centuries they had been as well treated by the Sultans as heretic subjects had been by Christian kings, and the wrongs from which they suffered were caused chiefly by the arbitrary abuse of power by individuals. But the Turks distrusted them. The rayahs, whether they were Greeks, Servians, Roumanians, Bulgarians, Armenians, Albanians, Bosnians, or Montenegrins, were in the habit of appealing to foreign states for protection against their rulers. With the sympathy engendered

by a common faith, the members of the Latin Church looked to France for protection, and the Greek Christians, who were by far the most numerous, numbering some twelve million persons, appealed for redress to Russia. These knew that any act of violence or injustice which they suffered at the hands of the Mussulmans would enlist on their behalf the sympathies of the Czar himself and of some fifty millions of his Christian subjects. Russia, however, had other reasons besides religious ones, which caused her to turn her thoughts so readily to the grievances of the subject Greeks. So great a country as Russia, comprising eight and a half million square miles of land, and a population not much short of one hundred million people, sought its natural outlet on the south-west corner of the empire, where their seaboard touched the waters of an inland sea. The dismemberment of Turkey could alone give them the position they desired, and this they had been unable to accomplish. The border provinces of Moldavia, Wallachia, and Servia, known as the Danubian Principalities, were carefully watched by the European Powers, and the advance of troops across the border was looked upon as ground for European interference.

The late reactionary policy of the Turkish Government had been followed by a revolutionary wave in the Principalities. A popular rising took place at Bucharest, and Russia claimed the right to restore

order. The Turkish ministers appealed to Canning, and he advised them not to treat the Wallachians as rebels, but to inquire into their grievances, and to avoid any military occupation, lest Russia should follow the example. The Turks accordingly sent a commissioner to inquire into the Wallachian demands, but they could not forbear from sending troops across the Danube. This gave the Russians sufficient excuse to enter Moldavia. The Turkish commissioner was threatened, and thereupon twelve thousand Turkish troops were ordered to occupy Bucharest. The Czar demanded the punishment of the Wallachians; but the Turks refused, saying that the Sultan could manage his own subjects unaided. This rebuff was one of a series of repulses which the Czar had met with from the Turks, and he began to suspect that the opposition came from the resolute Englishman at the Porte, rather than from the Ottoman Government. Confident in his power, the Czar proposed a seven years' occupation of the Principalities, and Reshid declared he would rather resign than accede. Meanwhile the Hungarians and other patriots had sought refuge on Turkish soil, and the Sultan, acting on Canning's advice, refused to give them up to their enemies. Fresh incursions of refugees, Poles and Hungarians, arrived at Constantinople, and the Austrians and Russians urgently demanded their extradition. Canning still counselled unfaltering resistance, which the Porte adhered to, until the Russian Prince Radziwil arrived

with an ultimatum demanding yes or no with regard to giving up the fugitives. Then the ambassador was summoned to the Porte. With all the impressive solemnity which he knew so well how to use he bade the Porte take courage to remain true to the everlasting principles of honour and humanity, to its own independence and dignity as well as to the law of Moslem hospitality, and to refuse to obey the Czar's command.

Emboldened by his fearlessness, and even to some extent inspired by his spirit, the Porte resolved on resistance. So far the victory was with Canning and the French ambassador, who had assisted him. But an interval of six weeks had to be passed before either of the ambassadors could learn whether their policy would be countenanced by their governments, and possibilities must have occurred to them of Russian troops, who might appear on the Balkans, or the Sevastopol fleet, which might sail into the Bosphorus.

Waiting during a time of suspense is anxious work. Not an hour was lost by the vigorous mind that ruled the Foreign Office. The decision of the English Cabinet was taken immediately, a messenger was sent off to Canning, and presently Palmerston despatched a second messenger, Captain Townley, who rode eight hundred and twenty miles in five days and eleven hours, bringing with him an answer from the Cabinet of moral and material support to the action taken by the Turks.

As soon as the British and French fleet appeared off the Dardanelles, Austria and Russia withdrew the principal demands. Canning's conduct throughout the negotiation won the admiration of his government, and never had he been so popular in England. The Porte also came in for its share of sympathy. The Turks, as Palmerston said, were "frightened at their own courage, but were not frightened out of it."

In return for his support, Canning claimed from the Porte continued progress, and he represented to the Sultan that his Majesty must *deserve* the friendship of England by acts of reform and of toleration. Further demands from Russia in Wallachia caused the Sultan to press for an English alliance, and Canning urged it on Lord Palmerston. "The Porte," he said, "must either sink or swim; she could no longer float." Pleased with the prospect of an alliance, the Sultan laid the Elchi's whole scheme of reform before the Council, only remarking that some changes might be effected at once, that others would require time. The reactionary party was, however, still strong, and notwithstanding the enthusiasm of the Christian subjects at his achievements, when Canning left Constantinople in 1852 he felt that he had attained little of all the progress that he had hoped for.

In 1851 he had accepted an offer from Lord Derby, then Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to join his Cabinet, should the Queen summon him to form

one. When the opportunity occurred in 1852, the offer was not repeated, and Lord Malmesbury unexpectedly found himself in the place which the popular voice had marked out for the Elchi. Canning in the same year accepted a peerage, and became Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe; but it was not until it was made clear that it was offered "on the score of his long and able service," and was in no degree a compensation for the Prime Minister's change of mind. About the same time the Paris Embassy fell vacant, and Lord Stratford, after his forty-five years of diplomatic service, was considered entitled to it. But he was again passed over. Events, however, followed which brought compensation both for the loss of the Foreign Office and of the Paris Embassy. Hardly had he been six months in England before there arose a general cry for Lord Stratford's return to Constantinople. There was no one else who could manage the Turks in the new crisis, and the ministers begged him to resume his embassy with as little delay as possible.

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XI

THE HOLY PLACES DISPUTE

1853

The circumstances which called so imperatively for Canning's presence at Stamboul arose out of disputes between the Latin and Greek monks about the holy shrines of Palestine. The Mussulmans, who held possession of these shrines, could, from the nature of their own religion, sympathise with the sentiment which impelled such vast numbers of pilgrims to travel from far-distant lands to worship at the sacred manger in the rock at Bethlehem, or to kneel at the grotto of the Blessed Virgin at Nazareth. The Greek votaries poured into Jaffa from the north, earnestly desiring to see the places around which their faith centred. The devotees of the Latin Church, who were perhaps less devoted, carried with them the religious prestige of France, "the eldest daughter of the Church."

When at the close of Mahmud's reign the Ottoman power had become weakened, the Turks had found themselves unable to settle the disputes as heretofore.

The Greek monks appealed to Russia to support their claims, and the Latin monks turned to France. The Porte was bewildered as to how to satisfy the French claims without arousing the indignation of the Czar. First, they promised the right of the key of the Sacred Manger to the Latin Church, and then privately promised the Russian envoy that the Pasha of Jerusalem should be instructed not to give up the key. The Sultan wavered until he had aroused the anger of both the powers. Eventually, the silver star (of France) was escorted with great pomp by Latin monks from Jaffa, and replaced by the Latin patriarch in the Sanctuary of the Nativity; the key of the great door, and the keys of the Sacred Manger, were handed by the Pasha to the Latin priests. This was more than the Russian people could bear, and their united religious convictions called for reparation for the injury done to the supremacy of their Church. There were few causes which could appear to them so worthy of their zeal as to raise the banner of the Cross in those provinces where fifteen millions of their Christian brethren were held in subjection by the Porte, whilst to drive the infidel Turk out of Europe would be some reparation for the indignity which their Church had suffered. The ambition of the Czar corresponded with the instincts of the people. He was the head of the Church as well as the Czar of all the Russias. His tall stature and command-

ing presence helped to impress the people with the idea that he carried in his person the actual power of the State. Sure of his own power, and of the sympathies of his people, he cared very little what line the French might take. But he was resolved not to get into conflict with England. He was aware of Lord Aberdeen's strong desire for peace, and he made secret overtures to England, but the government declined to enter on any secret engagement. He then determined on sending Prince Menschikof in state, as special envoy, to Constantinople, to claim the rights of the Greek Church at the Holy Places, and at the same time sent troops to the south of his empire. A panic followed at Constantinople, and Menschikof took advantage of the alarm to endeavour to obtain from the Porte an engagement granting the Czar a protectorate over the Greek Church in Turkey. The panic increased, and Montenegro rose in revolt. Under these circumstances, the British Government requested Lord Stratford to return to the Porte with as little delay as possible. The settlement of the Holy Places dispute was left to his own judgment, but, "in the event of imminent danger," wrote the Foreign Secretary, "to the existence of the Turkish Government, your Excellency will in such case despatch a messenger to Malta, requesting the admiral to hold himself in readiness; but you will not direct him to approach the Dardanelles without positive instructions from Her Majesty's Government."

Against the threatening power of the Czar, with a million soldiers at his command, the ambassador was sent out; but the only power granted to him was the right to request the admiral of the fleet to hold himself in readiness.

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XII

PRINCE MENSCHIKOF'S MISSION

1853

"On the morning of the 5th April, the Sultan and all his ministers learnt that a vessel of war was coming up the Propontis, and they knew who it was that was on board. Long before noon the voyage and the turmoil of the reception was over, and except that a corvette under the English flag lay at anchor in the Golden Horn, there was no seeming change in the outward world. Yet all was changed. Lord Stratford de Redcliffe had entered once more the palace of the British Embassy. The event spread a sense of safety, but also a sense of awe. It seemed to bring with it confusion to the enemies of Turkey, but austere reproof for past errors at home; and punishment where punishment was due, and an enforcement of hard toils and painful sacrifices of many kinds, and a long farewell to repose."[1]

Before a day was over, the Grand-Vizier and the Reis Efendi began the explanation of their diffi-

[1] Kinglake's "Crimea."

culties to the ambassador. They did not at first tell him all, for fear of his anger if he should learn that they had even listened to Prince Menschikof's demand for a protectorate over the Greek Church. By degrees they ventured to disclose the Russian proposals, and at last they put their case before him hypothetically. It was clear to Lord Stratford that, by their vacillation, the Turks had given the Russians ground for complaint, and he at once saw the importance of keeping the question of the Holy Places separate from the other subjects of dispute. He knew that Prince Menschikof's demands meant that the Czar claimed the right to interfere in almost any matter referring to the twelve or thirteen million members of the Greek Church who were subjects of the Porte. By allowing the Holy Places dispute to be dealt with as a separate question in his interview with Lord Stratford, Prince Menschikof unwittingly gave away the only ground he possessed for the other Russian claims. Very carefully Lord Stratford touched on the Holy Places dispute, the centre of so much religious sentiment throughout Europe. He recognised what the custody of the key and the presence of the star meant to the Greek Churchmen, and, with deference to their feelings, he approached the subject with gravity and care. At each point in the dispute he was ready to admit all the just claims that Russia could make. The natural gravity of his manner prevented the Prince from seeing the in-

significance of the points he was gaining. "For the Greek patriarch to be authorised to watch the mending of a dilapidated roof, for the Greek votaries to have the first hour of a day at a tomb, and, finally, for the doorkeeper of a church to be always a Greek, though without any right of keeping out his opponents—these things might be trifles, but, awarded to All the Russias through the stately medium of the English ambassador, they seemed to gain in size and majesty."[1] To the French ambassador Lord Stratford carefully explained that the priority proposed to be given to the Greeks was a priority resulting from their "habit of early prayer," and not due to "any claim of theirs for precedence."

Thus was settled the dispute of the Holy Places. But the pacific tone which had prevailed throughout the negotiations was changed when angry and indignant despatches arrived from the Czar. Nicholas had learnt that the man who had formerly withstood his plans was again at the Porte, and he knew that his envoy would not prove successful against him. He sent Prince Menschikof stringent orders not to deal with the Elchi, but to address the Porte secretly and directly. If the Czar's demands were rejected, the Prince was to withdraw his embassy. Menschikof now discovered that he had allowed the real ground of attack to slip from under his feet. He saw that already a different spirit inspired the

[1] Kinglake's "Crimea."

Turks, and that the panic which preceded the ambassador's return was over. He perceived that he could not now coerce the Turks. "They had returned," wrote Mr. Kinglake, "to their old allegiance. They could take their rest, for they knew that Lord Stratford watched. Him they feared, him they trusted, him they obeyed. It was in vain now that the Prince sought to crush the will of the Sultan and of his ministers. Whether he threatened, or whether he tried to cajole; whether he sent his dragoman with angry messages to the Porte, or whether he went thither in person; whether he urged the members of the government in private interviews, or whether he obtained audience of the Sultan, he always encountered the same firmness, the same courteous deference, and, above all, that same terrible moderation, day by day and hour by hour, was putting him more in the wrong. The voice which spoke to him might be the voice of the Grand-Vizier, or the voice of the Reis Efendi, or the voice of the Sultan himself, but the mind which he was really encountering was the mind of one man."

The Czar's patience was exhausted; his discomfiture was bitter, and the eyes of all Europe were upon him. Not only had the English ambassador gained that supremacy in Turkey which he had desired for himself, but he had taken upon himself the protection of the Christian population, members of the Greek Church, who were bound to the Czar by ties of religion and race. He ordered despatches

to be sent urging Menschikof to an open rupture with the Sultan, and gave the Porte five days only in which to consider his demands for a Russian protectorate over the Greek Church. It was not till near the close of the Turkish deliberations that the ambassador, at a solemn audience in the Sultan's palace, informed Abdul-l-Mejid, in his most impressive tones, that, in case of danger, he was instructed to request the commander of her Majesty's forces in the Mediterranean to hold his squadron in readiness. On the following day the Turkish ministry decided to reject the Prince's proposals. Prince Menschikof expressed his painful surprise, and offered three more days for reflection before considering his mission ended. He forced his way into the presence of the Sultan, and this breach of etiquette brought about the resignation of the Grand-Vizier. Reshid, Lord Stratford's ally, came again into office. As Foreign Minister, he requested five or six days in order to prepare the Porte's reply to the Prince's note. Upon this the Russian ambassador wrote a threatening note, and declared his official relations with the Porte to be broken. Lord Stratford assembled the three other ambassadors at his house, and laid the situation before them, and it was then decided that Reshid Pasha would be the best judge of the line to be pursued. Reshid had already determined on resistance; and when the Prince asked him for a direct Yes or No, he answered, "No." Prince Menschikof then with-

drew from the Bosphorus. He promised that no warlike steps would follow, yet the Russians invaded and occupied the Principalities.

From this time the statesmen of Europe prepared various schemes for the promotion of peace. One of them was the famous "Vienna Note," which Lord Clarendon accepted without waiting to see the plan which had been approved by Lord Stratford and his colleagues. In accordance with the instructions he received, the ambassador officially recommended the Vienna Note to the Porte, and dwelt on the strong and earnest manner in which it was supported by the British Government. Reshid, however, took exception to certain portions which he considered would have the effect of creating a Russian protectorate over the Greek Church in Turkey. The Turkish Council held a stormy meeting and rejected the Note. "It would have been better for Turkey," said Reshid, "to have yielded at first than after so much support from the Powers to be now unseasonably abandoned." The Elchi himself had not foreseen such good grounds for distrusting the Note as the Turkish minister had pointed out, but he proposed some modifications of the Note; and very soon afterwards the Russian analysis of these modifications was let out, and all the world knew that Lord Stratford with Reshid and the Turks was in the right, and the four Powers in the wrong, in their interpretation of the document "so highly commended."

The Czar totally rejected the Turkish amendments. The Turks demanded the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the Principalities, and the evasive answer they received was looked upon as a declaration of war by Russia.

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XIII

THE SUMMONS TO THE FLEET

October to December 1853

In June 1853 the English and French fleets arrived in Besika Bay with a view to protecting the Porte, but so long as they remained outside the Castles of the Dardanelles, Russia had no right to protest. Lord Stratford resolved that so long as he could keep them outside, outside they should remain, for the effect of their arrival would not only aggravate the Russians, but would rouse the war spirit of the Turks. Already they were somewhat "out of hand." Theological students and professors publicly protested against concessions being made to the infidels, and rose in mutiny. This disturbance excited the French ambassador, and he drew a harrowing picture of it to his government. Lord Clarendon was so much impressed by his telegraphic report, that, without waiting for Lord Stratford's despatches, he telegraphed to him: "Your Excellency is instructed to send for the British fleet to Constantinople." A few days later it was clear that the couple of steamers which

Lord Stratford had brought up had served to quell the disturbance. But the Russian ambassador had taken umbrage, and he declared that the instruction to the fleet was a breach of treaty. To this Lord Clarendon answered, that the Porte had ceased to be at peace from the moment when the first Russian soldier had entered the Danubian Principalities, and he added that the whole fleet was to go up to Constantinople. The ambassador wrote that he was "deeply sensible" of the government's interest in the preservation of British lives and property, but that fortunately there was no necessity whatever for calling up the squadron. For a fortnight longer he successfully resisted every attempt to force on an appeal to the admirals. An unfortunate impression had, however, been made at St. Petersburg, and Prince Gortschakof's reply to the Turkish notice to quit the Principalities showed that the two countries were at war; and the Sultan, fearing lest a sudden descent should place the capital in jeopardy, requested the protecting presence of the fleets, which he knew the ambassador had power to command. Lord Stratford waited twelve days before he would consent to give the momentous order to the admiral. "I had almost risked a quarrel," he wrote to Lord Clarendon, "by holding out so long." It was on the 20th of October that the ambassadors of England and France summoned the fleets, and two days later the ships entered the Hellespont. Meanwhile Lord Stratford

was communicating his "note" to London and Vienna, which accorded to Russia all, and more than all, that she had a right to ask, and which he believed the Porte was prepared to accept. His "note" was accepted in Paris and London, and Lord Clarendon earnestly entreated at Vienna that anything coming from Lord Stratford might be "favourably considered." Austria, however, threw over the note, on the ground that war was already declared. Prussia and France then brought forward plans of their own, and a project arrived from Lord Clarendon. Reshid Pasha admitted that two months earlier the Clarendon note would have been accepted by the Porte, but said it was different now that hostilities had broken out. Lord Stratford approved the note, and used every means in his power to recommend it. He visited Reshid, and urged its acceptance on him, but his efforts were unavailing. "I could obtain nothing beyond a promise that my arguments should be faithfully repeated to the Council. I might accompany him, he said, to the Council, and make my own statement, or, if I thought he was an obstacle, he was ready to give in his resignation." It is a true saying, "Master the difficult, and you will be expected to perform the impossible." Lord Stratford found that he could not control the military spirit which had been roused. "I grieve to say that Reshid is as hot upon war as any of his military colleagues." The Turks were eager for war, and

soldiers were pouring in from the distant provinces. Besides, whatever the ambassador might say, the fleets of the two greatest powers in the world were at anchor above the capital, and it was not to be believed that the squadrons had come there for nothing. It was natural that the Turks should feel like fighting, and fighting in company; and by this time the government knew that concession to Russia might mean revolution at Stamboul. Lord Stratford strove to impress upon them that however natural their sentiments might be, their indulgence was neither just nor wise, seeing that the original difference could now be settled on safe and honourable grounds, whilst an unnecessary continuance of hostilities might bring the horrors of a general war. Whilst negotiations were being carried on in hopes that peace might prevail, a catastrophe occurred. The English and French fleets were anchored in the Bosphorus, with the object of defending the coasts of Turkey from Russian invasion. The natural course was to send part of the squadrons out into the Euxine to reconnoitre. But here that duality of command, which England had afterwards so much cause to rue, began to show its disastrous effect. Any movement of the fleets required the consent of the two admirals and the two ambassadors. The French admiral and ambassador objected to the Black Sea trip, consequently the British fleet could not issue out independently. This made it easy for six Russian ships to enter

unobserved into the harbour of Sinope, where they destroyed eleven Turkish vessels of war lying at anchor, massacred four thousand men, and sailed away. The importance of the action lay in the fact that it was done in the face of the allied fleets sent to protect Turkish territory from attack. Notwithstanding this fatal disaster, Lord Stratford succeeded in inducing Turkey and the four Powers to accept his "Projet"; but the Czar's pride was wounded, and he now openly claimed a protectorate over the Principalities. The Sultan knew that to admit such a protectorate would cost him his throne. Lord Stratford had so guided him that he had the sympathies of Europe, and under his sway the Turks had behaved with surprising patience and judgment. They were conscious of the moral position they had thereby gained, and of the moral support they could consequently claim.

The Russian troops still held the Principalities, and when Lord Clarendon demanded their withdrawal on penalty of war, the Emperor Nicholas, enraged at the subsequent entrance of the fleets into the Black Sea, declined to answer, and a declaration of war was issued by the Queen in Council on March 28.

The ambassador's immediate difficulties were with the Turks. He had to prevent Omar Pasha, the Turkish general, from crossing the Danube and risking all in a spirit of self-confidence. He had

to obtain the recall and punishment of two of the pashas from Asia, one of whom he described as the personification of cruelty, falsehood, and cowardice. He had trouble with the Bashi-Bazouks, irregular soldiers. "No pen," he said, "can write the crimes they have committed; if they were paid by Russia, they could not serve her cause better." He obtained a firman for their control and chastisement. An insurrection in Greece added to the difficulties.

Early in 1854 the English troops poured into Turkey, and they depended on the Turks for nearly all their wants. Before they arrived, barracks had to be found for them, and there was a general outcry for coal. It was the English ambassador who had to supply both barracks and coal. As the difficulties increased, the English Government professed unbounded confidence in his Excellency, and Lord Clarendon gave him *carte blanche;* but the admirals were not submissive, and the vigorous measures of the ambassador were met by their irresolution.

"You are kind enough," wrote Lord Stratford, "to tell me that I may act upon my own responsibility without fear of being called to account, but how can I act to any good purpose if I have nothing to act upon?" It was difficult to make the home government understand the essential conditions of the struggle. Lord Stratford impressed upon them that the most decided, vigorous, and comprehensive measures in the outset would

be likely to prove the most economical and the most humane. But the government could not grasp the fact till the horrors of a Crimean winter taught them its truth; and meanwhile they trusted to their ambassador to do for them all those things which they ought themselves to have done.

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XIV

INVASION OF THE CRIMEA

1854

Towards the end of April 1854, Lord Raglan arrived at the Embassy. He was then sixty-six years of age, active in mind and body, and so gracious in manner that by his "mere presence he swayed the minds of men."

From the first he felt the difficulties which arose from the dual control of the expedition. The French general, St. Arnaud, lost no time in intriguing for the command of the Turkish army, and, confident of success with the Porte, he asked for an interview on the subject with Lord Stratford and Lord Raglan. Very graciously he was received by the ambassador, who listened benignly to his proposals, and then almost casually read him an extract from the Tripartite Treaty which convinced him of their impracticability. Lord Raglan also pointed out that the scheme might not be agreeable to Omar Pasha. The ground seemed to shift from under St. Arnaud's feet, and the question became no longer what St. Arnaud wanted, but what Lord

Stratford thought. St. Arnaud left the Embassy, and he did not again refer to his scheme.

The fortress of Silistria was the key to the situation, and the Russians had laid siege to it before the English troops had arrived. Two young English officers in the besieged city inspired the defenders with such enthusiasm that the fortress was saved, and the Czar's army withdrew. In the Principalities the Ottoman troops, headed by half-a-dozen English officers, had repelled the invasion and chased the Russians across the Danube. The Turks had protected their country with no help from without, except that of moral support. Their success made it apparent that the object of the war was gained, and the Czar had no option but to acquiesce. It was hard for him to hear of his armies being compelled to retreat by inferior numbers of Turkish troops under a few English officers, but the condition of affairs was such as would have obliged him to come to terms with Turkey and the allies.

The Emperor of the French, who cared more for the English alliance than for the war itself, left the decision of peace in the hands of England. But the war spirit of the people had been fully aroused, and the idea of desisting from war, because the objects had been attained for which it had been declared, was not congenial to their feelings. The Duke of Newcastle, Secretary for War, represented the popular feeling, and urged that it would not

be possible to secure a safe and honourable peace without the reduction of the fortress of Sevastopol. He was ready to take the full responsibility of his project, and at a meeting of the Cabinet he obtained the consent of the ministers to his despatch. They were said to have been dozing or overcome with fatigue at the time. When the despatch reached Lord Raglan, he considered that it left him no alternative but to invade the Crimea, and he gave the order for that invasion, which involved both countries in so many disasters. Reports reached Constantinople of a reconnaissance by the fleets, then of a landing, and, near the end of September, the ambassador received a letter which told of deadly fighting on the Alma. "We attacked," wrote Lord Raglan, "and carried a most formidable position yesterday, and we drove the enemy clean off it, notwithstanding the large force of infantry and artillery by which it was occupied."

The siege of Sevastopol followed, and Lord Raglan wrote to Lord Stratford for more Ottoman troops. In two or three days some four thousand men were ready, and though the delay which disgraced all our transport arrangements kept the men in the Bosphorus a day or two longer than was necessary, they arrived at Balaclava in less than a week. More Turkish troops arrived two days later. "I cannot say how much I feel the exertions you have made," wrote Lord Raglan, "but what would have been impossible for another was practicable for

you." St. Arnaud used to say, "Le Sultan, c'est Lord Stratford."

Opposite Pera, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, stood the hospital at Scutari; and when the transports laden with maimed and fevered soldiers began to arrive, it was soon evident that there was neither accommodation, nor medical and nursing staff, nor furniture and stores at all equal to the need. The worst sufferings of the wounded were endured on board the transports, where no sort of provision seems to have been made for the sick. There was also mismanagement at Scutari, which was increased by the refusal of the officials to allow that anything was wrong. In the eyes of the staff, to have appealed to the Foreign Office for aid that should have come through the War Office would have been a worse crime than letting the patients die from want. "It would really seem," wrote the Elchi, "that the professional people would rather look on in silence than accept aid from without." However, the necessities of the hospital were in the early stages of the war provided by the Embassy; and though it was impracticable with a small staff, and in face of the opposition of the hospital authorities, to set all to rights, yet considerable progress was made.

On the 4th of November, Miss Nightingale arrived with forty nurses, and Lord and Lady Stratford used their influence freely and powerfully to help her; and Lady Stratford gave her constant

personal attention to the hospital. The Sultan gave up his palaces and barracks to the wounded, and ordered his ministers to furnish supplies and stores. The difficulty lay in the transports. The Sultan, the Elchi, and the markets were on one side of the Bosphorus, and the hospital on the other. But the place teemed with helpers, and more nurses were in prospect, almost to the dismay of Miss Nightingale, who had only accommodation for six. Miss Stanley, sister of the Dean of Westminster, arrived at the end of December, accompanied by forty-six nurses and sisters—a number, said Miss Nightingale, "which exceeds my worst anticipations." The ambassador obtained for them Turkish cavalry barracks at Kuleli, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, which were placed under the management of Lady Stratford just as fifteen thousand sick and wounded were arriving from Balaclava. Miss Stanley was appointed superintendent.

Meanwhile, ignorant of much that had been done, and well informed of what had been left undone, the English public were ablaze with indignation at the state of the hospitals at Scutari. The *Times* and the country together bewailed the sufferings of the patients there, some of which were imaginary. But a good system of military nursing was established, which has been continued ever since, and a movement which began in something of a panic has since developed into an invaluable branch of the service.

XV

THE SIEGE OF SEVASTOPOL

1854–1855

PERHAPS no army has ever gone forth to war worse equipped than the expedition to the Crimea. Provisions and clothing were lacking for the troops, corn and forage for the horses. The men were shivering for want of blankets and huts; the sick and wounded were lying on bare floors for want of beds, and many soldiers were in need of boots. The ambassador was appealed to to find the clothes, the boots, the blankets, the huts, the beds, as well as reinforcements, without delay. He had the bazaars scoured for supplies, and compelled the Turkish ministers to help to the utmost. But all the exertions of the ambassador and his staff could not make up for the deplorable want of foresight in the arrangements of the home authorities; and though England was palpitating with sympathy, it was long before her hearty aid could reach the sufferers; and many of her gifts went astray, and never served the end for which they were intended.

Every department of government, as well as the

Embassy at Constantinople, became absorbed in the effort to remedy the effects of the unpreparedness which had plunged the army in the Crimea into such a state of sickness, depression, and starvation as to raise the indignation of the whole people of England. Lord Stratford sent labourers from Constantinople to make passable the roads from the harbour to the camp, and an engineer and English navvies arrived for the same purpose; and though the men at first demurred at going to a place "little better than a pest hole," when there they did excellent work. The deficiency of our transport service had to be supplied by Turkish assistance, the deficiency of stores by purchases in Turkish markets; and for both these purposes the authority and vigilance of the Elchi were required. More houses had to be obtained for the wounded—even the Sultan's private apartments were given up to them; and just when it seemed impossible to discover a single empty stable or house, a requisition came to the Embassy for accommodation for two thousand horses. Hardly was this accomplished than a depôt had to be found for the Sardinian contingents, and for this they looked to the Elchi. Even the Turkish forces could not obtain the stores and other supplies which they needed without his instruction. Demand after demand was made from England for every conceivable kind of assistance. Notwithstanding all the energy exercised at the Embassy, and subsequently by the home authorities,

such evils as had taken root at the seat of war could not be remedied. A tone of gloomy anticipation of failure took the place of that cheerful spirit which had hitherto characterised the prediction of the soldiers. Gloomy despair marked Lord Clarendon's letters. There was a general belief that the fortress of Sevastopol might have been taken immediately after the battle of Alma, but Canrobert had changed his mind three times as to a proposed expedition, and Lord Raglan could not act without him. Lord Stratford visited the scene of operation, and during a review of the French troops he hinted to General Canrobert that it was a pity to delay action. The general replied, "Ah! Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, les consequences d'un insuccès dans la guerre sont très graves." "Sans doute, Monsieur le Général, mais il me parait que le plus grand des insuccès c'est de ne rien faire."[1] Among other causes of dissatisfaction which weighed on Lord Stratford's mind was the excessive disparity between the two armies of the allies: the French outnumbered the British troops by at least four to one; consequently our soldiers were numerically incapable of holding the wide extent of front which was allotted to them without undue strain. On the ambassador's return he formed a corps of twenty thousand men, but before they could arrive the assault upon Sevastopol had been attempted and

[1] *Note.*—Recent publications have traced Canrobert's vacillations to the direct interference of Louis Napoleon.

failed, and this disaster was followed by Lord Raglan's death. On September 8, Sevastopol fell. It was at this time that Lord Stratford urged upon the government that a barrier of independent and neutral states should be formed along the frontier of Russia and Turkey. "It may justly be said," he wrote, "that the duty of governments who have required so much from their subjects is to take care that the profits of the sickle shall be equal to the labour of the plough." But just when the army was in splendid health, when the defects of transport had been overcome, when twenty thousand sturdy Turks, enrolled and disciplined by Englishmen, had swelled the forces, diplomatists entered upon negotiations for a peace in which England was about to surrender all for which she had striven.

It was impossible that such a career as Lord Stratford's should run its course without incurring a degree of jealousy. It was brought to the surface by the general upheaval which followed the war. The Turks had been much impressed by the large numerical preponderance of the French troops, and the Ottoman minister began to consider whether it might not be advantageous to have France as an ally. Lord Stratford could easily have held his own had he been fully supported by his government, but Lord Clarendon was under the influence of Louis Napoleon, and more ready to take the part of the French than of the Elchi. The jealousy of

the French, the disaffection of some of the Turkish ministers, and the desertion of the English Foreign Secretary combined to diminish the prestige of England in Turkey, and with it the popularity of her representative.

During the winter 1854–55, when the sufferings of their soldiers in the Crimea became known, violent public feeling was aroused in England against every one concerned in the war. They blamed the government, they blamed the Elchi; and though the wave of popular feeling soon passed, it was not without leaving behind it a clear sense that blame attached somewhere for the initial mismanagement of the Crimean expedition. The public indignation was again excited when Kars fell in November 1855. This fortress in Armenia had been gallantly defended by the Turks for four months under European officers—amongst them was General Williams. For twelve years previously Lord Stratford had held pleasant relations with General Williams. "I rejoice," he wrote, "that a sensible and dispassionate professional man should be on the spot to report the exact state of things; I propose to act vigorously on all his recommendations." Lord Stratford had urged Williams's requisitions on the Grand-Vizier, on Reshid, and on the War Minister. The Porte showed no opposition; supplies were ordered; everything was promised. Progress was slow—as everything is wont to be in Turkey—and the Turks were really at their wits'

end to provide the necessary supplies. Williams recorded with satisfaction their arrival, but on the next day he wrote to Lord Clarendon to complain of the total neglect with which he had been treated by her Majesty's ambassador, and this notwithstanding thirty-two official despatches from January to November, and communications weekly, and sometimes daily, in support of his requisitions. Whether his nerves were affected by the trying situation he was in, or whether he wanted to find some excuse for his sudden surrender when Omar Pasha was on the road to relieve him, is not known, but Lord Clarendon took advantage of the complaint to send a despatch condemning the ambassador's silence.

The news of the surrender of Kars caused immense excitement in England. The people, moved by the story of the endurance of privations by the defenders, and of more than one stirring feat of arms, were anxious to find some one on whom to throw the blame; and, knowing as little of the details as of the difficulties of the case, they caught at the story of unanswered despatches, and concluded that Lord Stratford was responsible for the fall of Kars. Later on, when looked at dispassionately, the charge seemed an absurdity; but it was very serious to the excited imaginations of the people in 1855. "I have no fear," wrote Lord Stratford, "of my countrymen when they have the means of judging fairly before them." The Blue

Book on "Military Affairs in Asiatic Turkey" made the facts public, and men regretted their temporary infatuation. Lord Palmerston rose in Parliament with all his manly, honest vigour, and dwelt upon the long and honourable career of the great Elchi, his many services to his country, his fair unspotted fame, and demonstrated in unanswerable terms the absurdity of the charge made against him. He carried the House with him; they turned away from the petty details of unanswered despatches to the great facts of Lord Stratford's career, and the bubble which had caused so much excitement vanished before the honour and tribute which was rendered to the great Elchi's name.

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XVI

TREATY OF PARIS

1856–1858

After the fall of Sevastopol, Louis Napoleon was as anxious for peace as he had previously been eager for glory. He entered into secret negotiations with Russia, contrary to the treaty of alliance, and it was not till the plenipotentiaries were summoned to Paris that Lord Clarendon discovered that England stood alone, and that peace was not so much offered as thrust upon Russia. In reference to the terms of peace, Lord Stratford wrote to Lord Clarendon, "I should like to see due precautions taken, and I know nothing better than a barrier of neutral or independent states prolonged between the two empires in Europe and Asia." With regard to the measures for Turkish reform, he wrote, "There is little prospect of keeping the Porte steady to their execution unless some kind of supervision be retained, which surely may be done, on the ground of our assistance to the Empire." He held still at heart the object for which he had laboured so assiduously—the reform of Turkey from within.

At the same time he sought to provide such external surveillance that it should not be possible for the native indolence of the official classes to make the reforms of no effect. He asked for a force from without to keep up a steady animating pressure on the government. So long as Lord Stratford was on the spot, there was no lack of "force from without;" but it was necessary to look forward to the time when Turkey should lose his counsels. He set to work to recapitulate, confirm, and enlarge all the reforms which had been successively wrung from the Porte since 1839. The result was the Hatti Hamayun of 1856, the great Charter of Reform, which the Porte was induced to announce by Imperial proclamation. It was incorporated into the Treaty of Paris. But no one knew better than its promoter that it needed enforcement far more than it needed this recognition; yet after the many years of toil he had devoted to obtaining these rights, his own government agreed to the treaty without insisting on any clause in it which would entitle any of the Powers to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Jealousy and suspicion had created a state of mutual paralysis among the Powers, and they left the Sultan to manage his own affairs, lest one or other of their number should be tempted to take advantage of the weakness of Turkey. Lord Aberdeen openly disavowed his belief in the possibility of Turkish reform, yet he signed the treaty which

made the internal administration of Turkey, in great measure, the concern of all Europe, and at the same time gave no right of interference. When Lord Stratford learnt the terms of the treaty, his first words were, "I would rather have cut off my right hand than have signed that treaty." The hard-won triumphs of his diplomacy in 1853 he saw carelessly abandoned in 1856. In his letter to Lord Clarendon he said, "Few men can do more than see things from their own point of view. Here the peace gives rise to many anxious thoughts. How are the Sultan's reforms to be carried through—the Allied troops all gone, and no power of foreign interference reserved?"

The ambassador could not but fear lest the increasing influence of the French, who cared nothing for Turkish reform, would render the charter a dead letter. This was not unnatural, and might indeed be expected, but he felt deeply the desertion of his own government.

The Elchi returned to London on leave in 1857, at a time when popular sentiment had again veered round in his eulogy. Lord Palmerston received him cordially. A very few weeks passed, and the government was turned out on an amendment relating to their neglect to reply to some foreign despatches. Lord Stratford's feeling was that of sympathy with Palmerston, and he resolved to show his respect for the defeated minister by declining to hold office under his successors. Ac-

cordingly, at the age of seventy-one, he sent in his resignation to Lord Malmesbury; but he had no sooner resigned than he began to regret it. He had become so accustomed to diplomatic work that he did not know how to live without it. He returned to the Porte, but only to take formal leave of the Sultan and to wind up the affairs of the mission.

Once more the Elchi revisited the scene of so many toils and triumphs, once again he paced the palace at Pera; but the time was short, and he came only to depart for ever. All the stately ceremony by which he was welcomed by Sultan and ministers—all the gratitude of the many he had rescued from oppression, all the devotion of the British subjects whose cause he had upheld, could not reconcile him to the mournful task he had undertaken. He felt as if he were assisting at the funeral of his hopes. He begged an assurance from the Sultan that the course of reform which had begun so auspiciously should not be stayed when he was no longer there to see. It was with deep feeling that the Sultan, assuring him that reform would be attended to, took leave for ever of his old counsellor and friend.

The presence of the ambassador roused the enthusiasm of the British colony. Merchants of Constantinople, American missionaries, Armenians, and Protestants assembled successively to do him honour and to express their gratitude.

The last ceremony in which Lord Stratford took part was that of laying the foundation-stone of a memorial church. Before the venerable statesman took the trowel in hand, he spoke a few words of parting. He recalled the past years and the progress that had marked them, the changes that had followed; he referred to the character of the war, to the Charter of Reform, and to the free religious worship which it had made possible.

The parting soon came. The people whom he had helped and protected followed him in crowds to the landing-place. Stately and courteous, he remained standing on the steamer's poop, and his calm features showed no sign of the hidden mental strain. The last farewells were said, the ship of war moved off, and from the shore many eyes were strained to see the last of that commanding presence which had been the centre of so many hopes and fears during the greatest epoch of the century.

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XVII

LAST YEARS

1880

THE last years of Lord Stratford's life were spent near Tunbridge Wells, and in 1878 he retired to Frant Court, never again to move.

Here people came to consult him about the struggle then going on with Turkey, and the re-opening of the Eastern Question. He had not altered his long and firmly established views on the duty of England in the East. He still believed in the supreme authority of the Sultan as being essential to counteract the influence of Russia in the Christian provinces, and he held to the possibility of a reformed Turkey, worthy to take her place in "the family of Europe."

It was in 1880 that Lord Stratford's strength began to fail. A few days followed by wearied restlessness, and then, in the early morning of August 14, he passed, without pain or struggle, to where "beyond these voices there is peace."

"Even now his presence seems to fill the room where he lived and wrote and thought. Here the

trifles and vexations of everyday life did not come —it seemed to be another better, higher life that surrounded him and elevated all he touched. Truer views of men and of events, calmer judgments, higher appreciation for a noble aim, even though it seemed to fail in the least as in the greatest; with a pity beyond expression for everything in a man or a nation, which was mean, cruel, or self-seeking."

"Yesterday," spoke Dean Stanley, in his sermon, "the greatest ambassador of our time, was, after a life prolonged far beyond the natural limits of human existence, laid to rest in a little churchyard (Frant) in the county of Sussex. Many are they who will be grateful to the end of their days that they have known his majestic character. No one could enter into his presence, either as he sat on what may truly be called his throne at Constantinople, or during the long years of his dignified retirement, without feeling that they had seen a king of men. No one could hear the name of Stratford Canning named throughout the far East without feeling that as long as he retained his post the honour of England was safe in his incorruptible integrity, in his munificent liberality, in his unshaken firmness. No one could hear his influence spoken of by Christian or Mussulman, Protestant or Catholic, Greek or Turk, without feeling that each man knew that he was a terror to evil-doers, which none could confront with impunity, a refuge for the desolate and oppressed which none could

seek in vain. No one who had ever witnessed it could forget the boundless industry, the noble generosity with which, through all the chaos of the Crimean war, he laboured for the sick and suffering soldiers, or defended those who went out to succour them. No one could mistake that in his energy, in his remonstrances, in his purity, the tottering fabric of the Eastern Empire, which for years he held in his mighty grasp, had at once the best bulwark against its ruin, the best guarantee against its evil deeds."

Four years later, on May 24, 1884, a statue was unveiled in Westminster Abbey. It was a national tribute to the memory of the great Englishman who had upheld the honour of his country at the post of danger. Upon the base are the lines of Tennyson :—

"Thou third great Canning, stand among our best
And noblest, now thy long day's work has ceased,
Here silent in our Minster of the West
Who wert the voice of England in the East."

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